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In Secret Trial, India Sentences 6 for Spying for U.S.

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NEW DELHI, Oct. 29 — A judge here today sentenced six men, including five former Government officials, to three-year jail terms for spying for the United States and passing on secret information about India's military projects.

The trial lasted nine years and was held in closed session by the judge because of its sensitive nature. Its long duration was a result of the secrecy and a sequence of adjournments. The defendants had been free on bail.

Judge S. C. Jain said one of the officials, K. K. Sareen, a former director at

the Planning Commission, was a "double agent" who had also worked for the Soviet Union.

One of the men was identified as P. E. Mehta, a business consultant, who was described as the "kingpin of the operation" and who purportedly confessed to selling information to American Embassy officials here between 1962 and 1977.

The others convicted were a second director at the Planning Commission, two former aides to Cabinet ministers under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and a junior official in a major Government trading organization.

The judge found all six men guilty in five separate cases related to espionage and sentenced them to three years each in each case. Judge Jain said the sentences would run concurrently. It was not known whether the six would appeal.

Two junior Government employees were acquitted.

The two ministerial aides were identified as Mahabir Prasad, a personal secretary to Y. B. Chavan when he was External Affairs Minister, and C. S. Balakrishnan, a clerk in the office of P. C. Sethi, then Minister for Defense Production. The other Planning Commission member was identified as R. P. Varshney.

During the trial, the court was reportedly told that the officials had passed to Mr. Mehta, the businessman, secret reports of the external affairs, chemicals and petroleum ministries. Prosecutors said Mr. Varshney had supplied information about India's main aircraft design and production center, plus drawings of Soviet-made guns, missiles and radar, to Mr. Mehta, who then sold it to staff members of the American Embassy.

The Press Trust of India said at least six embassy officials had been implicated in the trial. They were identified as William M. Decker, James Higham, Vendon Bos, David Parker and Mr. and Mrs. Donald V. Schuller.

Sources familiar with the case said the Americans as well as one Soviet trade official had been asked to leave India immediately after investigators

discovered ring. The Russian was not identified today.

The Press Trust said the police arrested Mr. Mehta and E. L. Choudhuri, of the state trading corporation, in January 1977 as they were exchanging classified documents in a washroom at a luxury hotel here.

The news agency said that "during interrogation, Mehta confessed that he had been passing on classified information to a succession of officials at the U.S. Embassy since 1962 for monetary consideration" and had made about \$420,000 in payments.